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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the perceived professional development and support needs for beginning home economics teachers and to determine how they use professional development and support. A census study was conducted using all beginning (having one, two, or three years of teaching experience) home economics teachers in Illinois. Seventy-seven teachers were identified and mailed a survey form, with an 86 percent response rate. Chi-square analysis for nonparametric data and Pearson correlation coefficients were used to assess data. The study found that beginning home economics teachers identified "student motivation" as their greatest professional development need, followed by "stress management." "Gifted education" and "education of the mentally handicapped" ranked highest in perceived need for additional knowledge. The professional development activities that were most frequently used were "consultation with department head," followed by "faculty meetings." "Meetings for sharing ideas with other teachers" were perceived as the most helpful form of professional development, followed by "professional meetings." The beginning teachers identified "acceptance of the importance of the subject matter I teach" as their greatest need for additional support, followed by "feedback on my teaching" and "help in reducing my workload." Additional support was also needed in the areas of praise and acceptance of subject matter. As a result of the study, recommendations were made for the school system, the college, and the professional organization to act as partners in the socialization process of beginning home economics teachers. (KC)

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PERCEIVED NEEDS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT BY BEGINNING HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS

MARILYN F. SINDER

Introduction

A great deal of turbulence has been experienced by some beginning teachers. The plight of these beginning teachers was illustrated by Pataniczek and Isaacson (1981):

> When asked if beginning teachers should be given special assistance, nearly two-thirds of secondary teachers in one study advocated the immediate assumption of full responsibilities without special assistance. In interviews many of these same teachers reported nightmarish tales of their own first year. (p. 17)

A major concern of beginning teachers is their own professional survival. This conclusion was reached by Shelley (1979), Pataniczek (1979), Ryan (1979), and Lichtenstein (1981). Cruickshank (1982), in a review of research to determine the professional problems of classroom teachers in eight studies over a 15-year period, supported this conclusion.

Research data to support the widely held belief that some beginning teachers find the first year to be one of severe disillusionment were provided by Gaede (1978). Subjects, 272 first-year teachers, reported a rise in self-assessed knowledge on the Professional Training Readiness Inventory during student teaching only to report a decline on every subscale of this instrument during their first year of teaching.

People search for career environments that will let them exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and roles, noted Holland (1973). Career

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changes occur, according to Holland and Nichols (1964), when people see the assets and liabilities as well as the future opportunities and limitations associated with their career more clearly. Other reasons cited for making career changes involve lack of interest and aptitude needed to purse that career.

Attrition rates of teachers were studied by Charters (1970), Mark and Anderson (1978), and Anderson and Mark (1977). They noted that one out of every four teachers (25%) left teaching for another career.

Specifically, Mark and Anderson (1978) found that 16% of the new entrants in 1973 left teaching after the first year. In 1968 the attrition rate for first year teachers was 35%. Charters (1970) found that the proportion of beginning teachers leaving after 4 years of teaching decreased from 56% in 1968 to 41% in 1972.

Unable to cope with the realities of teaching, some beginning teachers leave the profession. In an analysis of the attrition rate of beginning teachers in downstate Illinois from 1972-73 to 1977-78, in Burlingame's study, 2,400 females (42%) and 1,000 males (38%) with one year of experience left teaching. While the percentages suggest that male and female teacher decline has been similar, the numbers make it clear that many more women than men have left teaching. Research has indicated that those who choose teaching as a life-long career are a distinct minority. Burlingame (1980) concluded that "the determination of mechanisms which shape the early years of teaching, say from the first to the fifth, and which influence the choice of teaching as a

career deserve scrutiny" (p.11).

Beginning teachers seemed to have the most difficulty during the first year of teaching concluded Adams (1982). This conclusion was based on data from longitudinal studies of beginning teachers over a five-year period. Adams cited the lack of a systematic plan to help beginning teachers made the transition from college student to teacher as a contributing factor in this difficulty. Shelley (1979), in a study of first-year teachers, found that beginning teachers asked for help with 25% of their problems.

Support was one source of help for beginning teachers as they made the transition from student teacher to experienced teacher. Cruickshank, Kennedy, and Myers (1975) defined support as the "understanding and sustenance of administrators and other teachers that promotes efficiency and growth as a teacher" (p. 9).

Professional development is one means of socializing beginning teachers into the profession. Professional development, as used in this study, refers to all formal and informal education and activities that facilitate growth as a teacher.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived professional development and support needs for beginning home economics teachers and to determine how professional development and support are being utilized by beginning home economics teachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions are posed in this study:

1. What are the perceived professional development needs of beginning home economics teachers?

2. What five needs are perceived as being most critical for professional development activities?

3. What is the relationship between perceived professional development needs and years of teaching experience?

4. What is the relationship between perceived professional development needs and years expected to remain in teaching?

5. How frequently do beginning home economics teachers participate in professional development activities?

6. What five professional development activities are perceived as being most helpful?

7. What is the relationship between frequency of participation in professional development activities and years of teaching experience?

8. What is the relationship between participation in professional development activities and years expected to remain in teaching?

9. What are the perceived support needs of beginning home economics teachers?

10. What five types of support are perceived as being most needed?

11. What is the relationship between perceived support needs and years of teaching experience?

12. What is the relationship between perceived support needs and years expected to remain in teaching?

Population and Sample

A census study was conducted using all beginning secondary home economics teachers who were teaching in the state of Illinois during the 1983-1984 school year. The list of downstate teachers, all those outside the Chicago Public School System, used in this study

study was obtained from the State of Illinois Teacher Certification Board. Seventy-seven teachers were identified as having one, two, or three years of teaching experience. Only full time teachers were used in this study. An 86% response rate was obtained.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed a Likert-type survey instrument based on information obtained by reveiwing the literature. The Cronbach alpha test was used to establish the reliability of the instrument.

Statistical Treatment

Chi-square analysis for nonparemetric data and Pearson correlation coefficients were used to assess data. In addition means, standard deviations, and weighted totals helped describe data.

Professional Development Needs

Beginning home economics teachers identified "student motivation" as their greatest professional development need followed by "stress management." "Gifted education" and "education of the mentally handicapped" ranked highest in perceived need for additional knowledge. There were no significant differences between professional development needs and number of years of teaching experience or years expected to remain in teaching.

Participation in Professional Development Activities

The professional development activities that were most frequently utilized were "consultation with department head" followed by "facutly meetings." "Meetings for sharing ideas with other teachers" was perceived as the most helpful form of professional development

followed by "professional meetings." As the number of years of teaching experience increased, so did participation in "school inservice," "professional meetings," "meetings with state consultants," and "faculty meetings."

Additional Support Needed

"Acceptance of the importance of the subject matter I teach" was identified by beginning teachers as their greatest need for additional support followed by "feedback on my teaching" and "help in reducing my workload." "Praise or positive reinforcement" and "acceptance of the importance of the the subject matter I teach" ranked highest as areas where additional support was needed. As experience increased, the perceived need for "help in understanding my teaching role" and "ways to prevent the need for keeping up false pretenses" decreased. The perceived needs for "recognition and respect from staff and students" and the "opportunity to talk about my professional problems" were greatest during the first year, dropped during the second year, and rose during the third year.

Additional support with "help in boosting my morale" decreased as the number of years expected to remain in teaching increased. The greatest need for "help in knowing who to trust" was expressed by teachers with five to nine years of experience. As years expected to remain in teaching increased, the need for "praise and positive reinforcement" decreased.

Recommendations

The basis for this research study was to explore the socialization process of beginning home economics teachers. Socialization

of beginning teachers was examined and found to be inadequate causing frustration and anxiety. These factors have a negative impact on learning and classroom climate.

The school system, the college, and the professional organization need to act as partners in the socialization process of beginning home economics teachers. Each area contributes its own expertise and is vital to the total process. A working relationship needs to be established so the expertise of each is fully utilized.

A planned and co-ordinated socialization program that extends through three years should be instituted by the school system. This program should include orientation, feedback, positive reinforcement, praise, and the opportunity to talk about professional problems in a non-threatening envronment. The need for mentors and regional support groups was established.

A planned and organized socialization program that extends through three years should be instituted by the school system. This program should include orientation, feedback, positive reinforcement, praise, and the opportunity to talk about professional problems in a non-threatening environment. The beginning home economics teacher needs to feel valued as a member of the educational team. This may be a problem when 59% of beginning home economics teachers in this study were in single teacher departments. The assignment of a mentor by the school system is recommended. Frequently, department heads/team leaders are cast into this role. The mentor should have some home economics expertise to facilitate the "opportunity to talk about my professional problems." Regional support groups could be organized to help

beginning teachers when a mentor with home economics expertise is not available within the school system. The beginning home economics teachers in this study expressed a need for praise and feedback from their principal. It is recommended that the socialization process provide praise and feedback from principals, especially during the critical first year.

Data showed that beginning home economics teachers participate more in professional development activities that occur within the extended school environment. Faculty meetings, consultations with department heads, consultations with principals, and school inservice are often mandatory. Research is needed to examine ways to meet the professional development needs of beginning home economics teachers utilizing these sources. The formation of a working relationship between the school system, the college, and the professional organization is vital if the extended school setting is to be fully utilized.

The data support the need for the education of home economics teachers beyond a bachelor's degree. Beginning home economics teachers find college courses to be among the most helpful forms of professional development. Follow-up by the colleges through the critical first year is recommended. The follow-up by colleges should include quarterly meetings in regional sites to permit the "opportunity to talk about our professional problems" and "sharing of ideas." Other sessions could be made via closed circuit television, video recorders, telenet, and electronic blackboards which bring the college classroom to the beginning teacher. Released time for professional development purposes should be provided by the school system.

Professional organizations need to deal with the "importance of the subject matter I teach." Companies as well as individuals can provide volunteer services as speakers, materials, and aides. Participation by professional organizations should provide support, spread enthusiasm, and assist in improving the quality of home economics programs. Recruitment practices of beginning teachers into professional organizations needs to be strengthened.

Motivation, stress, and management were identified as major concerns of beginning home economics teachers. College programs, inservice education, and professional organizations need to address these topics. In addition, there is a need for long-range career planning including areas as administration and political involvement.

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